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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Forty-fifth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIRST PART (PUBLIC)* OF THE 1067th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 18 August 1994, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. GARVALOV

CONTENTS

Tribute to Mr. Houshmand, former Secretary of the Committee

* The summary record of the second part (closed) of the meeting appears as document CERD/C/SR.1067/Add.1.

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

TRIBUTE TO MR. HOUSHMAND, FORMER SECRETARY OF THE COMMITTEE

1. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee welcomed the opportunity to express personally to Mr. Houshmand, who had retired from his post in the Centre for Human Rights earlier in the year, its appreciation of his many years of work in the cause of human rights. Mr. Houshmand had been with the Committee since its inception and indeed had been its first Secretary. His whole career in the United Nations had been devoted to the cause of human rights. Members of the Committee had over the years had many opportunities to esteem his personal qualities and to appreciate his vision and his dedication to his work. Whatever the Committee might have achieved was in no small measure due to his efforts. The Committee extended to him every good wish for a healthy, happy and successful retirement.

2. Mr. YUTZIS said that, in both his official and personal capacity, Mr. Houshmand had contributed much to the cause of human rights. His encyclopaedic knowledge of the voluminous documentation in the human rights field had been of invaluable assistance to members of the Committee in locating information, and his constant readiness to assist members of the Committee as far as it lay in his power had gained him their highest esteem. He wished Mr. Houshmand every success in his future projects and plans.

3. Mr. SONG Shuhua said that during the 10 years he had been a member of the Committee, he had had many opportunities of appreciating Mr. Houshmand's many exceptional qualities. His capacity for hard work, his intelligence and his vast knowledge had all been willingly placed at the service of the Committee. He hoped the Committee would not lose sight of Mr. Houshmand in his retirement, which he hoped would be full and satisfying.

4. Mr. VALENCIA RODRIGUEZ said that Mr. Houshmand's long and valuable service in the field of human rights, which had begun with the Committee in 1970, had been greatly appreciated by all past and present members of the Committee. His skill, energy and patience, and his devotion to human rights and the work of the United Nations deserved the highest tribute. He had the Committee's sincere thanks and its best wishes for the future.

5. Mr. van BOVEN said that, both as a member of the Committee and as a former director of the Centre for Human Rights, he had had many opportunities to appreciate Mr. Houshmand's loyalty and competence as an international official as well as his many personal qualities. He wished him well in his retirement, but hoped he would not lose touch completely with the Committee so that it might continue to have the benefit of his counsel.

6. Mrs. SADIQ ALI recalled that when she had first become a member of the Committee and was unfamiliar with its work, Mr. Houshmand's unfailing assistance and patience had been of the utmost assistance to her. Another phase of life began with retirement; she hoped Mr. Houshmand would profit from it to the full.

7. Mr. ABOUL-NASR said that, as one of the original members of the Committee, he had known Mr. Houshmand during the many years of his service and counted him a good friend. In his work on the Committee he had found Mr. Houshmand's cooperation and assistance invaluable and he associated himself with the many expressions of appreciation that had been made.

8. Mr. de GOUTTES said that since he had become a member of the Committee four years previously, he had on many occasions greatly appreciated Mr. Houshmand's valuable qualities, combining as they did a very high level of efficiency with extreme tact and discretion. He expressed his sincere thanks to Mr. Houshmand for all the work he had accomplished.

9. Mr. AHMADU associated himself with all the good wishes that had been expressed to Mr. Houshmand. Like other members, when he himself had joined the Committee, he had greatly valued Mr. Houshmand's help and his never failing kindness. While wishing Mr. Houshmand a full and active retirement, he hoped he would not forget the Committee, as it would not forget him.

10. Mr. WOLFRUM said he, too, had greatly appreciated the guidance and assistance Mr. Houshmand had given to new members of the Committee. While he hoped that, in retirement, Mr. Houshmand would find time to explore all his many interests, he also hoped that his expertise in human rights would not be lost to the Committee and that mutual contacts could be maintained.

11. Mr. SHAHI said that, Mr. Houshmand had demonstrated the highest level of integrity and competence in his service to the United Nations and to the Committee and in his quiet efficiency was a worthy representative of a country that had enjoyed 2,000 years of civilization.

12. Mr. FERRERO COSTA said that other members of the Committee had left him little to add to the tribute paid to Mr. Houshmand's contribution to the cause of human rights. He had been an inspiration to the members of the Committee and to his fellow staff. He hoped his knowledge and expertise would not be lost to the Committee in the future.

13. Mr. RECHETOV said the he, like Mr. van Boven, had been able not only as a member of the Committee, but also as a member of the United Nations Secretariat, to appreciate Mr. Houshmand's qualities. However, although his own service had been relatively short, Mr. Houshmand had devoted a great part of his working life to the international public service, of which human rights was a very important branch. Members of that service were open to great pressures from various groups and Governments, but Mr. Houshmand was one of those who had always retained his professional integrity and independence. His work had contributed a great deal to the protection of human rights. He wished him well in his retirement.

14. Mr. SHERIFIS associated himself with the general appreciation of Mr. Houshmand's qualities both as an international official and as a human being and with all the good wishes expressed to him on his retirement.

15. Mr. HOUSHMAND, thanking the Committee for its good wishes, said he had merely carried out his duties in the manner expected of all international officials. He was proud to have served as the Committee's first Secretary and had indeed begun his service a few weeks before the States parties had met to elect its first members, his first assignment being to draft the new Committee's rules of procedure. His career in 25 years of service with the Centre for Human Rights had been bound up with the implementation of treaties, procedures and mechanisms in general and with the work of the Committee in particular. He, in his turn, wished to pay a tribute to the work the Committee had itself done during the past 25 years. It had taken many constructive initiatives, made improvements in practices and procedures and pioneered many measures later emulated by other United Nations treaty bodies. He was proud to have been associated with its work and paid a tribute to the contribution made by all its members, past and present. He looked forward to the opportunity to continue his contacts with the Committee and would continue to follow its work with interest.

The public part of the meeting rose at 11 a.m.